

Andrew Gilbert from the Mercury News comments on the freshly released festival's line-up.

“19TH ANNUAL DOWNTOWN FESTIVAL FEATURES ARTISTS AND STYLES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Think global and dance local could be the motto of the 19th Comcast San Jose Jazz Festival, which runs Aug. 8-10 in and around Plaza de Cesar Chavez.

Produced by San Jose Jazz, which also presents the free Jazz at Santana Row summer concerts and winter Sunday Jazz Series at the Improv, the festival features a wealth of talent from around the globe, with a particular emphasis on the African-derived rhythms of Latin America and the Caribbean.

From the brilliant Cuban saxophonist Yosvany Terry, who's been tearing up the New York scene in recent years, and the rising Brazilian guitarist-composer Chico Pinheiro, to North African-inflected rhythm and jazz of the Mo'Rockin Project and tenor saxophonist George Brooks' Indo-jazz ensemble Summit, featuring tabla legend Zakir Hussain, the festival embraces the multiplicity of the contemporary jazz scene.

While many artists were still unconfirmed when San Jose Jazz released the festival lineup on Tuesday, the hundreds of planned acts include a generous helping of blues and R&B musicians, including headliners David Sanborn on alto sax and the L.A. neo-swing combo Big Bad Voodoo Daddy.

Not that straight-ahead jazz is neglected. A pair of octogenarian big-band veterans embody the West Coast's rich tradition of sophisticated arranging. Tenor saxophonist Dave Pell celebrates the legacy of Lester Young, and Bill Holman, whose credits include classic charts for Woody Herman, Gerry Mulligan and his own Grammy-winning ensemble, presents his talent-laden L.A. orchestra.

The new generation of jazz masters is well represented by 25-year-old trumpeter Christian Scott, who has released two impressive sessions for Concord Jazz, and Berkeley-raised tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens, an accomplished composer whose 2007 debut recording, “The Timeless Now,” garnered some of last year's most glowing reviews.

And while jazz's avant-garde legacy is mostly ignored, the great San Jose trumpeter Eddie Gale, who contributed to classic recordings by Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra, returns to the festival.

The region's own rich array of vocal talent is also featured, including accomplished songwriter Roberta Donnay, the spectacular Rio-born improviser and composer Claudia Villela and the inspired Gail Dobson, who presents a family band spanning three generations.

The oft-overlooked male vocal contingent is covered, with crooner Jonathan Poretz, suave soul singer Nicholas Bearde, former Santana frontman Tony Lindsay, and the L.A. pianist and Grammy-winning composer John Proulx, who delivers standards in a style influenced by early Chet Baker.

But no facet of the Bay Area scene is covered with as much breadth and depth as Latin music, from the Brazilian carnival beats of SambaDá and the hard-charging timba grooves of Cuban percussionist Jesus Diaz to the Latin jazz of trombonist Wayne Wallace and trumpeter Marina Garza's salsa-meets-funk Orquesta D'Soul. "

By Andrew Gilbert
for the Mercury News
Article Launched: 06/12/2008